

**Testimony before the Health Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee – 2/18/16**  
**in opposition to proposed cuts to School-Based Health Centers**

Submitted by Rick Calvert, Chief Executive Officer  
Child and Family Agency of Southeastern CT, Inc.



Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker, Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Dillon, Members of the Health Subcommittee:

My name is Rick Calvert, Chief Executive Officer for Child & Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut, which operates 18 School-Based Health Centers in five communities throughout New London County. I am here to testify in opposition to the proposed cuts to School-Based Health Center funding. To borrow from the popular lawn signs that urge us to “Drive like your kids live here”, I am here with a plea for the Appropriations Committee to budget and “Vote like your kids live here.”

While we all recognize that dealing with the currently projected State budget deficit presents an immense challenge, the impact of continuing to dismantle a significant portion of the State's School-Based Health Center (SBHC) service capacity for a second year in a row will be devastating. With SBHCs perennially playing a critical role in identifying, serving and treating our most at-risk youth through integrated, barrier-free medical and behavioral health services, there has to be a way to balance the budget without doing further harm to this core piece of the safety net, especially given the School-based Health Centers' proven results.

Last year's cuts to the School-based Health Centers, totaling roughly 7.5%, had a direct impact, reducing both primary care and mental health service capacity. Children served by the 96 School-based Health Centers across 26 communities were harmed by reduced access to preventive health services, delayed sick visits, delayed school-entry physicals and reductions in other services. The resulting increase in use of Emergency Departments for non-emergency care wasted far more dollars than were saved through these cuts, and placing increased burden on working, often underemployed parents to take time off of work to attend to children who could have been medically served right in school is just a bad idea.

When the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health submitted her budget option last summer, which was made public last month, she herself made the case against any further cuts at least as well as I can, and I quote,

*“Decreased funding may result in a reduction of staff, hours, services or SBHC sites. Such reductions will directly impact the health and well-being of Connecticut's students, particularly those from vulnerable populations. Reduction in funds will reduce access to services for school-aged children and adolescents (including those from uninsured and underinsured populations) including primary care, mental/behavioral health, dental and health promotion/education/risk reduction activities.”*

Then-Commissioner Mullen made that statement attached to a budget option cut to Connecticut's School-based Health Centers in the amount of \$391,435. Imagine how much more forceful her statement would be regarding the currently proposed \$1.244 million cut. Public dollars going to the School-based Health Centers are amongst the most efficient and most impactful that can be spent. Improved health outcomes, effective identification and treatment of severe mental health needs, support for working parents, the elimination of transportation barriers, and addressing health disparities are all positively impacted by SBHCs. Continued unflinching support for the Centers is the right budgetary choice.

**Richard D. Calvert, LCSW – (860) 443-2896, ext. 1404 – [calvertr@childandfamilyagency.org](mailto:calvertr@childandfamilyagency.org)**  
**Child and Family Agency of SE CT – 255 Hempstead St., New London, CT 06320**